

AUG 7 1950

## THE CHOLERA.

Dr. Hamlin's Letter from Constantinople.

*To the Editor of the Christian Mirror.*

DEAR SIR.—The cholera which has just left us after committing fearful ravages, is making its way into Europe, and will probably cross the Atlantic before another summer has passed.

Having been providentially compelled to have a good degree of practical acquaintance with it, and to see it in all its forms and stages during each of its invasions of Constantinople, I wish to make to my friends in Maine some suggestions which may relieve anxiety, or be of practical use.

1st. On the approach of the cholera, every family should be prepared to treat it without waiting for a physician. It does its work so expeditiously, that while you are waiting for the doctor it is done.

2d. If you prepare for it, it will not come. I think there is no disease which may be avoided with so much certainty as the cholera. But providential circumstances, or the thoughtless indiscretions of some member of a household may invite the attack, and the challenge will never be refused. It will probably be made in the night, your physician

has been called in another direction, and you must treat the case yourself or it will be fatal.

3. *Causes of attack.* I have personally investigated at least a hundred cases, and not less than three fourths could be traced directly to improper diet, or to intoxicating drinks, or to both united. Of the remainder, suppressed perspiration would comprise a large number. A strong, healthy, temperate, laboring man had a severe attack of cholera, and after the danger had passed I was curious to ascertain the cause. He had been cautious and prudent in his diet. He used nothing intoxicating. His residence was in a good locality. But after some hours of hard labor and very profuse perspiration, he had lain down to take his customary nap right against an open window through which *a very refreshing breeze was blowing.* Another cause is drinking largely of cold water when hot and thirsty. Great fatigue, great anxiety, fright, fear, all figure among inciting causes. If one can avoid all these he is safe from the cholera as from being swept away by a comet.

4th. *Symptoms of an attack.* While cholera is prevalent in a place almost every one experiences more or less disturbance of digestion. It is doubtless in part imaginary. Every one notices the slightest variation of feeling, and this gives an importance to mere trifles. There is often a slight nausea, or tran-

sient pains, or rumbling sounds when *no attack follows*. No one is entirely free from these. But when diarrhea commences, though painless and slight, it is in reality the skirmishing party of the advancing column. It will have at first no single characteristic of Asiatic Cholera. But do not be deceived. It is *the cholera* nevertheless. Wait a little, give it time to get hold, say to yourself "I feel perfectly well it will soon pass off," and in a short time you will repent of your folly in vain. I have seen many a one commit suicide in this way.

Sometimes, though rarely, the attack commences with vomiting. But in whatever way it commences it is sure to *hold on*. In a very few hours the patient may sink into the collapse. The hands and feet become cold and purplish, the countenance at first nervous and anxious, becomes gloomy and apathetic, although a mental restlessness and raging thirst torment the sufferer while the powers of life are ebbing. The intellect remains clear, but all the social and moral feelings seem wonderfully to *collapse* with the physical powers. The patient knows he is to die, but cares not a snap about it.

In some cases, though rarely, the diarrhea continues for a day or two, and the foolish person keeps about, then suddenly sinks, sends for a physician, and before he arrives "dies as the fool dieth."

## COURSE OF TREATMENT.

1st. For *stopping the incipient diarrhea*. The mixture which I used in 1848 with great success, and again in 1855, has during this epidemic been used by thousands, and although the attacks have been more sudden and violent, it has fully established its reputation for efficiency and perfect safety. It consists of equal parts by measure of Laudanum, Spirits of Camphor and Tincture of Rhubarb. 30 drops for an adult, on a lump of sugar, will often check the diarrhea. But to prevent its return, care should always be taken to continue the medicine every 4 hours in diminishing doses 25, 20, 15, 10, 9, when careful diet is all that will be needed.

In case the first dose does not stay the diarrhea, continue to give in increasing doses 35, 40, 45, 60, at every movement of the bowels. Large doses will produce no injury while the diarrhea lasts. When that is checked then is the time for caution. I have never seen a case of diarrhea taken in season which was not thus controlled, but some cases of advanced diarrhea, and especially of relapse paid no heed to it whatever. As soon as this becomes apparent, I have always resorted to this course. Prepare a teacup of starch boiled as for use in starching linen, and stir into it a full teaspoonful of Laudanum for an injection. give one third at each movement of the bowels. In one desperate case abandoned as hope-

less by a physician, I could not stop the diarrhoea until the 7th injection, which contained nearly a teaspoonful of laudanum. The patient recovered and is in perfect health. At the same time I use prepared chalk in 10 grain doses, with a few drops of laudanum and camphor to each. But whatever course is pursued it must be followed up, and the diarrhoea controlled or the patient is lost.

2d. *Mustard Poultices*. These should be applied to the pit of the stomach, and kept on till the surface is well reddened.

3d. The patient, however well he may feel, should rigidly observe perfect rest. To lie quietly on the back is one half the battle. In that position the enemy fires over you, but the moment you rise you are hit.

When the attack comes in the form of diarrhoea, these directions will enable every one to meet it successfully.

4th. But when the attack is more violent, and there is vomiting, or vomiting and purging, perhaps also cramps and colic pains, the following mixture is far more effective and should always be resorted to. The missionaries Messrs. Long, Trowbridge, and Washburn have used it in very many cases and with wonderful success. It consists of equal parts of Laudanum, Tincture of Capsicum, Tincture of Ginger and Tincture of Cardamom seeds. Dose, 30 to 40 drops, or half a teaspoonful in a little water, and to be in-

creased according to the urgency of the case. In case the first dose should be ejected the second, which should stand ready, should be given immediately after the spasm of vomiting has ceased. During this late cholera siege no one of us failed of controlling the vomiting and also the purging by, at most, the third dose. We have, however, invariably made use of large mustard poultices of strong pure mustard, applied to the stomach, bowels, calves of the legs, feet, etc., as the case seemed to require.

*Collapse.* This is simply a more advanced stage of the disease. It indicates the gradual failing of all the powers of life. It is difficult to say when a case has become hopeless. At a certain point the body of the patient begins to emit a peculiar odor which I call the *death odor*, for when that has become decided and unmistakable, I have never known the patient to recover. I have repeatedly worked upon such cases for hours with no permanent result. But the blue color, the cold extremities, the deeply sunken eye, the vanishing pulse are no signs that the case is hopeless. Scores of such cases in the recent epidemic have recovered. In addition to the second mixture, *brandy* (a table spoonful every half hour), bottles of hot water surrounding the patient, especially the extremities, sinapisms and friction will often in an hour or two work wonders.

*Thirst.* In these and in all advanced cases thirst creates intense suffering. The sufferer craves water, and as sure as he gratifies the craving the worst symptoms return, and he falls a victim to the transient gratification.—The only safe way is to have a faithful friend or attendant who will not heed his entreaties. The suffering may be, however, safely alleviated and rendered endurable. Frequent gurgling the throat and washing out the mouth will bring some relief. A spoonful of Gum Arabic water, or of Chamomile tea may frequently be given to wet the throat. “Lydenham’s White Decoction” may also be given both as a beverage and nourishment in small quantities, frequently. In a day or two the suffering from thirst will cease. In a large majority it has not been intense for more than 24 hours.

*Diet.* Rice water, arrowroot, Lyndenham’s White Decoction, crust water, Chamomile tea, are the best articles for a day or two after the attack is controlled. Chamomile is very valuable in restoring the tone of the stomach.

*The Typhoid Fever.* A typhoid state for a few days will follow all severe cases. There is nothing alarming in this. It has very rarely proved fatal. Patience and careful nursing will bring it all right. The greatest danger is from drinking too freely. When the patient seemed to be sinking, a little brandy and

water or arrowroot and brandy have revived him. In this terrible visitation of the cholera, we have considered ourselves perfectly armed and equipped, with a hand bag containing mixture No. 1, mixture No. 2, (for vomiting, etc.,) a few pounds of pounded mustard, a bottle of brandy and a paper of Chamomile flowers, and a paper of Gum Arabic.

I lay no claim to originality in recommending this course of treatment. I have adopted it from suggestions of able and experienced physicians. Having been the only Doctor of many poor families living near me, I have tried various remedies recommended by physicians, but I have found none to be at all compared with the above. During the recent cholera I cannot find that any treatment has been so successful as this.

*Contagion.* The idea of contagion should be abandoned. All the missionaries who have been most with the most malignant cases day after day, are fully convinced of the non contagiousness of the cholera. The incipient attacks which all have suffered from are to be attributed to great fatigue, making the constitution liable to an attack.

In another letter I will give you a description of the cholera as we saw it, and of some individual cases.

Yours truly,

C. HAMLIN.

